United Nations S/PV.7134

Security Council

Sixty-ninth year

Provisional

7134th meeting
Thursday, 13 March 2014, 3 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Asselborn	(Luxembourg)
Members:	Argentina	Mrs. Perceval
	Australia	Mr. Quinlan
	Chad	Mr. Mangaral
	Chile	Mr. Errázuriz
	China	Mr. Liu Jieyi
	France	Mr. Araud
	Jordan	Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Hussein
	Lithuania	Mrs. Murmokaitė
	Nigeria	Mrs. Ogwu
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Oh Joon
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Rwanda	Mr. Gasana
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Mark Lyall Grant
	United States of America	Ms. Power

Agenda

Letter dated 28 February 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2014/136)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-506.

14-26370 (E)

Accessible document Please recycle

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Letter dated 28 February 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2014/136)

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Ukraine to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome His Excellency Mr. Arseniy Yatsenyuk, Prime Minister of Ukraine, and request the Protocol Officer to escort him to his seat at the Council table.

Mr. Arseniy Yatsenyuk, Prime Minister of Ukraine, was escorted to a seat at the Council table.

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Jeffrey Feltman, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to Mr. Feltman.

Mr. Feltman: I will focus my briefing on two aspects: recent developments in Ukraine and the work of the United Nations.

It is a reflection of the severity of this crisis and its possible wider ramifications that the Council is meeting to discuss Ukraine today for the second time this week and for the sixth time since 1 March. Serious attention has been accorded to this issue by the Council, in addition to multiple multilateral and bilateral diplomatic efforts, all aimed at seeking a peaceful resolution of the crisis.

The frequency of the deliberations, however, is also a reflection of the fact that, as the international community, we have not yet been able to deliver on our obligation — of which the Secretary-General has reminded us so often — to contribute to the de-escalation of tensions in accordance with the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations. Although it has so far proved elusive, the path towards a peaceful resolution of the crisis is still open. Let us seize it.

I will first speak about the developments in Ukraine. Since my last briefing to the Council (see S/PV.7131), the Secretary-General's concern about the deteriorating situation in Crimea and rising tensions in eastern Ukraine has further deepened. In Crimea, the seizure and blockade of Ukrainian military bases, as well as the majority of the State border service facilities, continue. There have been reports that a military hospital has been taken over by unidentified military personnel. On 11 March, it was reported that the Crimean authorities had closed down the airspace of the peninsula to all commercial flights except those to and from Moscow, citing the need to keep so-called provocateurs away from the peninsula.

We understand that the referendum called by the authorities in Crimea is expected to go ahead on Sunday, 16 March. There are no indications to the contrary.

On 11 March, Crimea's Parliament adopted a "declaration of independence of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea". On the same day, the Parliament of Ukraine, citing specific articles of the country's Constitution, adopted a resolution urging the Parliament of Crimea to

> "reconsider its decision of 6 March 2014 and bring it in line with the Constitution of Ukraine and the Constitution of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, approved by the Law of Ukraine of 23 December 1998".

The resolution further stated that if the parliament of Crimea failed to do so by 12 March 2014, the Parliament of Ukraine would "initiate the issue of early termination of powers of the Verkhovna Rada of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea".

Turning to United Nations activities, the Secretary-General continues his active efforts to speak with all relevant parties with the aim of seeking a peaceful resolution of the ongoing crisis. To that end, he will receive Mr. Yatsenyuk later this afternoon.

As I stated on Monday, the scheduled referendum has further complicated an already difficult and volatile situation. In that context, I regret to report to the Council that the local authorities have denied the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, Mr. Ivan Šimonović, access to Crimea, citing their lack of readiness to receive his visit and an inability to provide security.

Upon his departure from Ukraine, Assistant Secretary-General Šimonović intends to report on

the human rights situation throughout the country. For Crimea, he will have to rely on, inter alia, reports from the residents of Crimea, foreign diplomats based in Crimea and international non-governmental organizations, with whom he has been in contact. Given the vast divergences in reports about what is actually happening on the ground in Crimea, we would have much preferred that Assistant Secretary-General Šimonović had been able to collect first-hand accounts himself.

Assistant Secretary-General Šimonović has so far held meetings in Kyiv, Kharkiv and Lviv, including with representatives of local administrations, the Russian minority, non-governmental organizations, including a representative of the Crimean Tatars, and other civil society representatives, as well as with ombudspersons. During his mission, he has also continued to discuss options with the authorities for practical human rights measures that could be taken to strengthen human rights protection and contribute to de-escalation.

The human rights monitoring mission of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights is set to become operational in Ukraine by this coming Monday. In the light of the unpredictable situation, which could affect human rights, the Secretary-General is considering asking Assistant Secretary-General Šimonović to extend his mission.

Since the beginning of the crisis, the Secretary-General has called for a peaceful resolution that respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine. The Secretary-General continues to advocate for a resolution of the crisis in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. He appeals to all parties to avoid hasty actions or provocative rhetoric and to engage in direct and constructive dialogue in order to forge a peaceful way forward. He also continues to remind all parties that democratic values and international human rights norms must be upheld for all the people of Ukraine, including minorities. As part of the United Nations efforts, we also continue to closely coordinate our activities with key players and relevant regional organizations, including the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

In the highly charged atmosphere in Ukraine, exacerbated by a lack of trust and fear, the potential for intentional or unintentional escalation or miscalculations is real. We underscore that all sides must avoid unilateral actions that could further raise tensions and make de-escalation more difficult. It is high time for constructive engagement. Instability in Ukraine is in no one's interests and will have dire consequences for the region and the world.

The Secretary-General, under the auspices of his good offices, is the Council's partner in supporting and facilitating a peaceful resolution through dialogue. We are convinced that with genuine and concerted efforts by the international community, we can together pull Ukraine back from the brink.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Feltman for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the Prime Minister of Ukraine.

Mr. Yatsenyuk (Ukraine): It is a great honour for me to address the primary body that is responsible for peace, stability and security in the world. As far as I know, this is the sixth extraordinary meeting of the Security Council. The Council is well aware of what is happening on the ground but let me additionally report on the most recent developments in Ukraine. My country has faced military aggression by a neighbouring country that is a permanent members of the Security Council. There is no reason for that aggression; there are no grounds for it. It is absolutely and entirely unacceptable in the twenty-first century to resolve any kind of conflict with tanks, artillery and boots on the ground.

The Russian Federation has violated a number of bilateral and multilateral treaties that were signed between Ukraine and Russia. We strongly believe that Article 2 of the Charter of the United Nations, which states that

> "all Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations"

is not questioned by anyone. We still believe that we have a chance to resolve this conflict in a peaceful manner, and we commend and praise the Ukrainian military that have refrained from the use of any force.

We would like to be very clear and say that the military presence has been clearly identified. This is a Russian military presence, with Russian number plates on its vehicles. We urge the Russian Federation to pull back its military forces deployed in Crimea to their barracks and to start real talks and negotiations in order to tackle this conflict.

This is not an internal conflict. This conflict goes beyond the borders of Ukraine. Let me recall that in 1994, Ukraine abandoned its nuclear weapons. We gave up one of the largest arsenals of nuclear weapons — the third largest in the world — and, under the Budapest Memorandum, the signatories guaranteed the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of the Ukrainian State. The way our Russian neighbours — and I believe that if we talk real talks with Russia, they could be real partners — acted undermines the entire global security and nuclear non-proliferation programme, as after these actions it would be very difficult to convince anyone in the world not to have nuclear weapons.

I would like to reiterate again that the Ukrainian Government is absolutely open. We want to have talks, we do not want to have any kind of military aggression.

I shall now address the Russian Federation.

(*spoke in Russian*)

We are looking for an answer to the question of whether Russians want war. As the Prime Minister of Ukraine, which for decades had warm and friendly relations with Russia, I am convinced that Russians do not want war, and I hope that the Russian Government and the Russian President will heed the wishes of their people and return to the negotiating table to engage in dialogue and solve this conflict.

The President (*spoke in French*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as Minister for Foreign Affairs and European Affairs of Luxembourg.

I thank Mr. Jeffrey Feltman, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for his briefing. I welcome His Excellency Mr. Arseniy Yatsenyuk, Prime Minister of Ukraine, to the Council and thank him for his statement. His speech was very moving.

The situation in Ukraine is serious, in particular in Crimea. We cannot remain indifferent given the crisis the country is undergoing. Despite increasing tensions, we would like to believe that there is still time to avoid the worst — the annexation of Crimea by force. We hope that this public meeting of the Security Council — the body that, under the Charter of the United Nations, has the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and international security — will help to strengthen the efforts of the entire international community in favour of a peaceful settlement of the crisis in your country.

Luxembourg is deeply concerned by the crisis. During my trip to Kyiv on Monday as part of a working visit with my colleagues, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Belgium and the Netherlands, I came to a personal realization of the courage and resilience the Ukrainian people have shown over recent weeks. I also had the opportunity to observe the restraint and composure of Ukraine at a time when it is being faced with the violation of its sovereignty and territorial integrity in Crimea.

The decision taken on 1 March by the Council of the Russian Federation to authorize the use of the Russian armed forces on the territory of Ukraine and the actions taken on the ground over the past two weeks constitute flagrant violations of international law, especially the Charter of the United Nations and the Helsinki Final Act. They go against the commitments to Ukraine undertaken by Russia under the Budapest Memorandum of 1994 and under the Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation and Partnership between Russia and Ukraine, signed in 1997.

The main reason given by Russia for to justify its actions, that is to say threats against the rights of Russian speakers and Russian communities in Crimea, has been proved to be baseless, as noted recently the High Commissioner on National Minorities of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). We regret that it was not possible for the Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations for Human Rights to visit Crimea to corroborate that claim of the OSCE.

The holding on 16 March of a referendum on the status of Crimea is in both form and substance in violation of the Constitution of Ukraine. We call on Russia to cease all actions of support to that referendum. The great and powerful Russian Federation has no need to either encourage or to take advantage of this charade of a referendum, whose ballot papers do not even offer the option of voting against. If the referendum is held anyway, the international community will in no way recognize its outcome.

We are no longer in the era of Yalta or the time of divvying up the European continent. It must be possible to find a peaceful way out of this crisis that takes the interests of all parties concerned — including, of course, those of Russia — into account. The destabilization of Ukraine serves the interests of no one in the long term. We recognize Russia's historical ties

with Ukraine, including in the economic and cultural areas. We welcome the spirit of openness of the Prime Minister of Ukraine and his readiness to engage in negotiations — yet further reason for Russia to take the outstretched hand of Ukraine to establish a direct dialogue to defuse the crisis.

A lasting political solution to the Ukrainian crisis will also require inclusive political dialogue within Ukraine itself. Such dialogue must include all democratic political forces and all regions. It must reflect the diversity of Ukrainian society, the aspirations of all Ukrainians and the need to respect the rights of all Ukrainians. We support the efforts of the Government and the Parliament of Ukraine to promote such dialogue, which could, in our view, lead inter alia to a strengthening of the federal character of the Ukrainian State. But it is up to the Ukrainians alone to decide their destiny. Ukraine belongs only to Ukrainians.

As I said at the outset, I want to believe that it is still possible to avoid the worst and that there is still time to find a peaceful solution in keeping with the principles of our Organization and with the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations. Luxembourg encourages the continuation of intensive diplomatic efforts to establish a multilateral mechanism — a contact group bringing together key stakeholders, including Russia. The mechanism should allow us to initiate a military de-escalation, starting with a withdrawal of Russian forces to their places of permanent deployment. It should also permit the launching of direct dialogue between the Russian and Ukrainian authorities.

I welcome the efforts of the Secretary-General and the Deputy Secretary-General, and encourage them to pursue their mission of good offices. Luxembourg supports the efforts of the OSCE, in close cooperation with the United Nations and other international actors, to deploy a special observer mission, above all in Crimea and other regions of Ukraine, in agreement with the host country. Such a mission would assess the facts and respect for human rights, and promote dialogue on the ground in order to ease tensions and normalize the situation.

In conclusion, let me reiterate once again our call on all parties concerned, in particular Russia, to give priority to dialogue over violence and international law over the law of the strongest. The time has come to step up up diplomatic efforts to reach a solution to the Ukrainian crisis that respects Ukraine's political independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity in the interests of peace, stability and prosperity in Europe.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I shall now give the floor to the members of the Security Council.

Ms. Power (United States of America): This meeting comes at a time when every day we are seeing an ever starker contrast between the conduct of the authorities in Kyiv and the conduct of the authorities in Moscow. Let me consider each in turn.

Ukraine's Government is placing a priority on internal reconciliation, plans for free and fair elections, and political inclusivity. It has proposed the creation of a task force to consider the possibility of enhanced autonomy for Crimea within Ukraine. Ukrainian leaders have made clear the future they wish for their people — a future of pluralism, prosperity and dignity; a future free of corruption and cronyism; a future in which the Ukrainian people do not have to choose between East and West.

The Government of Ukraine has been unwavering in its pledge to honour all of its international agreements, including those covering Russian military bases. Ukraine has also shown remarkable restraint over the past few weeks with respect to the use of its armed forces. As evidenced today by the statement of Prime Minister Yatsenyuk, Ukraine's voice throughout this crisis has been one of reason, support for the rule of law and restraint in the face of provocation. Its Government was voted in nearly unanimously by the Rada and has since enjoyed broad support across the political spectrum, including from former President Yanukovich's former party. The Government also includes representatives from across the country, east and west, north and south.

Ukraine's leadership is properly focused on the needs of its people. Yesterday in Washington, D.C., the Prime Minister met with President Obama and other leaders of my Government, and also with top officials of the International Monetary Fund. The Prime Minister's goal is to stabilize his country's finances, curb corruption, and lay the groundwork for progress under a new Government to be elected peacefully,

freely and fairly by all the people of Ukraine on 25 May. These elections, which are just over two months away, will give any citizen who has a different vision for Ukraine the chance to be heard. It will give those who wish to shape Ukraine's future the chance to be elected. Ukraine's efforts to stabilize its economy and the coming elections merit the wholehearted support of every member of the Council and of the broader international community.

In Moscow, we see a different kind of leadership. Russia has pursued a course of military action from the outset. At the very start of the crisis, Russia massed its forces along Ukraine's border for military exercises, while supporting efforts inside Crimea to take control of Ukrainian border posts, surround Ukrainian military facilities, seize control of public facilities, and replace Ukrainian media with Russian stations. President Putin asked for and received authorization from the Federation Council to use military force in Crimea, and today there are reportedly more than 20,000 Russian troops in the region. Although Moscow justified its actions in the name of protecting ethnic Russians, Russian troops have repeatedly obstructed international monitors and mediators and denied them access, even though their task is to ensure that the rights of minorities are not violated. This is not the behaviour of people who believe that they have truth and law on their side.

The self-anointed Crimean leaders set a referendum with full backing from Russia. That date was to be 25 May. They then reset the date for 16 March, allowing less than two weeks to prepare for and carry out a vote — two weeks on an issue of monumental importance, risking grave destabilizing consequences, in defiance of the Ukrainian Constitution and in defiance of international law. The referendum ballot that will be put to voters contains no option to vote for the status quo. Ballots with nothing checked will reportedly be ruled invalid. As the vote approaches this weekend, the Russian military intervention continues, and we learned this morning of new military operations by Russian troops involving artillery batteries, assault helicopters and at least 10,000 additional soldiers near the Ukrainian border.

The proposed 16 March referendum on the status of Crimea is everything that the scheduled 25 May election is not. If the 25 May election offers an opportunity under the law for all Ukrainians to participate in charting their shared future, Sunday's referendum in Crimea is hastily planned, unjustified and divisive. Ukraine's Constitution requires that any change to its territory be achieved only through a national referendum. Because the Government has not authorized such a measure, the proposed balloting on 16 March would violate Ukraine's sovereignty. Any referendum on Crimea must be conducted within the bounds of Ukrainian law. Accordingly, the United States joins with others in calling for the suspension of that ill-conceived initiative, which cannot be recognized as legitimate, especially when carried out against the backdrop of a foreign military incursion. We also call on the Russian Federation to refrain from further actions in support of this dangerous undertaking.

The only true solution to the current crisis is through diplomacy. My Government strongly supports direct talks between the Russian Federation and the Government of Ukraine, to be conducted, if necessary, with appropriate help from the international community. Secretary Kerry will meet with Foreign Minister Lavrov tomorrow in the hope of finding a way off this path of confrontation. Given the risk of conflict, none of us can afford to leave any stone unturned.

But Russia has to want a diplomatic solution. The diplomatic path remains both viable and desirable, because the way forward is clear. Russian forces must return to their bases and Russia must honour its agreements with Ukraine. All countries must respect Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity and seek to resolve disputes through peaceful means. Every country must fulfil its obligations under the Charter of the United Nations and its commitments under the 1994 Budapest Memorandum and the Helsinki Final Act. Ukraine and the Russian Federation must abide fully by their bilateral agreements, including the 1997 Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Partnership and the 1997 basing agreement.

These steps, each in accordance with prior agreements, each consistent with international law, each in keeping with the best interests of the people of Ukraine, are all that is needed to end this crisis in a way that respects the rights and interests of everyone involved. In accordance with these principles, the United States is proposing a draft resolution for the Council's consideration that would endorse a peaceful solution to the Ukraine crisis based on international law and the Council's mandate to act, when necessary, to ensure global security and peace.

In closing, I would like to reiterate my Government's belief that, to resolve this crisis, what is needed now

is for a climate of restraint to replace confrontation, openness to replace obstructionism, and peaceful dialogue to replace coercion. This is the moment to show that laws matter, rules matter, and territorial integrity matters. If we do not come together, if we do not send a clear a signal of our shared commitments, we will live with the consequences in Crimea and well beyond. We will look back on this moment and wish we had come together with a unified voice before the consequences became dire and innocent lives were lost.

Sir Mark Lyall Grant (United Kingdom): I welcome Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk to the Security Council today. The United Kingdom stands side by side with the Ukrainian people in this time of crisis.

We commend Mr. Yatsenyuk, his Government and the people and armed forces of Ukraine for the remarkable restraint they have shown in the face of repeated provocation. Because of their strength of will, there is still a chance for a peaceful diplomatic solution.

Over the past week, we have heard in this Chamber and elsewhere an attempt to cast doubt on the legitimacy of the transitional Government in Ukraine. That is entirely unwarranted. Mr. Yanukovych deserted his office and his people in the midst of a crisis. Rather than work to implement the 21 February agreement, he abandoned his post. He was disowned by his own party and his removal was approved by an overwhelming majority of Members of Parliament.

The transitional Government that replaced him has already taken important steps — steps which uphold the spirit of the 21 February agreement and which lay the foundations for the future of Ukraine. They have restored the 2004 Constitution, they have begun the process of constitutional reform, and they have scheduled elections for 25 May. Those forthcoming elections will enable all Ukrainians to choose their own leaders. Internationals monitors stand ready to ensure that those elections are free and fair. We urge all parties to support that effort.

We all agree that Ukraine needs our support in this time of transition. We all acknowledge that Ukraine has a pressing need for reform, for improvements to its political culture, for political stability and inclusiveness, and for an end to corruption. We all support the call for investigations into the violence of the past three months, we all back fresh elections under international observation, and we all agree on the importance of protecting minority rights. Those points of agreement could form a basis around which we can coalesce to find a way forward.

But in order to move away from confrontation, the Russian Federation needs to accept that the cause of current instability in Ukraine lies not in Kyiv or in Donetsk. It comes from the actions of the Russian Federation in the Crimean peninsula where, against the express wishes of the Ukrainian Government, Russian military forces have taken control of a large part of the sovereign territory of Ukraine. We utterly condemn that blatant violation of the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine and the flagrant breach of international law.

Russia claims that it is acting to protect its citizens. We have heard claims of Russian speakers and nationals under threat, the Russian language outlawed, rampant anti-Semitism, and hundreds of thousands of refugees fleeing Ukraine. All those claims have been shown to be unfounded. The only part of Ukraine where minorities are under threat is in Russian-occupied Crimea, where Ukrainian forces are besieged in their bases and hundreds of members of the Tatar community are fleeing Crimea in fear, and where, as we heard just now from Mr. Feltman, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights Šimonović has been denied access and the opportunity to investigate the disturbing developments taking place in Crimea. But those international observers who have visited Crimea, including Astrid Thors, the High Commissioner on National Minorities of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, have found no evidence of any violations or threats to the rights of Russian speakers. They have, however, reported that, as a consequence of Russian actions, tensions between ethnic communities have increased.

We are deeply concerned by the decision of the so-called Crimean Government, installed by an armed putsch accompanied by Russian military intervention, to hold a referendum on 16 March to ascertain whether Crimea should become part of the Russian Federation. We are equally concerned by the legislative steps Russia is taking to facilitate that referendum.

It is absolutely clear that the proposed referendum would violate the Ukrainian Constitution. Article 73 sets out that any alteration to the territory of Ukraine must be resolved by an all-Ukrainian referendum. This is manifestly not an all-Ukrainian referendum.

Moreover, a free and fair referendum cannot possibly be held while Russian troops and Russian-backed militias dominate Crimea, where there is no electoral register, where there are restrictions on press freedom, and where voters will be casting their ballots under the barrel of a gun. Under such conditions, it is clear that any referendum vote in Crimea this weekend would be farcical. Worse, it would reopen ethnic divisions and risk a serious escalation in tension. Such a referendum will not be recognized by the international community.

A window of opportunity remains to find a peaceful resolution to the crisis. The window is narrow, but it exists. But finding that solution requires Russia to take a number of important steps. It must de-escalate. Its forces must return to their bases in Crimea and to the force level stipulated in the Black Sea Fleet basing arrangements. International monitors must be allowed into Crimea. Their presence will ensure that the rights of people belonging to minorities are fully respected by all parties. Russia should distance itself from the proposed referendum, clearly indicate that it will not seek to use the result as a pretext for annexation, and publicly reaffirm its commitment to the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine. And Russia must agree to proposals for a dialogue with the Ukrainian Government, either directly or through a meaningful international diplomatic process.

The Council is meeting today in the gravest possible circumstances. A referendum is set to take place on Sunday that is illegal under Ukrainian law and the consequences of which will clearly be inflammatory — a destabilization with serious implications for the United Nations Charter and international norms.

There is no need for this. What we have just heard from Prime Minister Yatsenyuk confirms what many of us have been repeatedly emphasizing in the Council — that there is a clear willingness on the part of the Ukrainian Government to address Russia's stated concerns through peaceful dialogue, discussion and negotiation. When there is a readiness for dialogue, it makes no sense — indeed, it would be dangerous and irresponsible — for Russia to take unilateral actions or collude with unilateral actions of the Crimean authorities. The United Kingdom urges Russia to refrain from such unilateral actions and to distance itself from the referendum set to take place on Sunday.

And the United Kingdom urges the Security Council to make clear that Ukraine's sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity must be respected and that any attempt to modify Ukraine's borders through unlawful means will not be tolerated.

Mr. Araud (France) (*spoke in French*): I welcome the dignified statement we just heard from the Prime Minister of Ukraine.

If the current crisis were not so serious, we could wax ironic about the recent statements made by Russian diplomats to explain the apparent movement towards the annexation of Crimea. That irony is based on two facts. First, Russia constantly refers to the agreement of 21 February, negotiated by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Germany, Poland and France, which it refused to endorse when it was signed. It has become a very belated supporter of that agreement after Yanukovych's shameful flight.

Secondly — and here the irony borders on the surreal — Russia refers to the opinion of the International Court of Justice, which ruled that the unilateral declaration of independence of Kosovo was not illegal. Russia never recognized that opinion and always disputed Kosovo's independence. We therefore await with interest the logical conclusion of that unexpected conversion — Russia's recognition of Kosovo.

It is interesting to note that, in its opinion, the International Court of Justice established two conditions. One was the contested character of the territory, which led to the existence of a unique legal order, resolution 1244 (1999), and the second was the non-use of force. Obviously, those conditions have not been met in Crimea, the status of which was in no way contested either by Moscow or the local assembly, and where the Russian occupation allows one faction, which received 4 per cent of the votes in the local elections, to organize a mock referendum in the shadow of Russian bayonets. As French Minister for Foreign Affairs Fabius said this morning, "in Crimea Sunday the choice will be between 'yes' and 'yes'".

But for Russia it is not a question of law, coherence or logic; it is a question of using anything and everything to justify the unjustifiable — the blatant and cynical violation of the Charter of the United Nations, whose foundation is respect for the territorial integrity and non-interference in the internal affairs of its Members.

Everything is therefore in place for the annexation of Crimea by Russia regardless of legal wrangling that

will fool no one. The Western media sees in this matter the triumph of the Russian chess player who will have checkmated the international community. I play chess pretty badly, but I see here above all the immaturity of a player who cannot help but try to take the rook and ends up losing the game. Russia will gain Crimea and lose its credibility. What will happen to the credibility of Russian diplomacy when it tries to returns to its foundations — respect for the territorial integrity of States and non-interference in the internal affairs of States — a diplomacy that encouraged and recognized the secession in Georgia and annexed a region of Ukraine? It will be met with nothing but sarcasm and a shrug.

What will happen to the credibility of Russian diplomacy in the former Soviet space? Are we not aware that certain independent States had been conquered by the Russian Empire before Crimea? Are we not aware that there are Russian and Russian-speaking minorities everywhere across that space? All that Russia will find there is distrust and anxiety. What will happen to the credibility of Russia in Ukraine? How can we imagine a reconciliation between the spoiler and the dispossessed? How can we understand the creation of a new Alsace-Lorraine a century after 1914? No one is asking Ukraine to choose between East and West. Russia has succeeded in doing so by leaving Ukraine no choice in the matter.

Finally, what will become of the rapprochement between the European Union and Russia when Russia tramples upon the values that led to the creation of the European Union and the resolve to break the cycle of invasions, occupations and demands? The European Union can only see its error in believing that its interlocutor shared the same objective. Russia will lose the game, but no one will emerge unscathed, because naked force will have imposed its logic. The fragile fabric of international law — the only guarantee and only barrier that small States have against the return of war — will have been torn.

In this moment of confusion, it is right for the Security Council to reaffirm the principles upon which the United Nations is founded. France therefore supports the draft resolution presented by the United States of America and calls for its being put to a vote before the holding of the referendum.

It is not too late. Let all of us, members and non-members of the Security Council alike, launch a final appeal to Russia. We understand the passions and concerns. We want to respond to them, but through respect for law and the territorial integrity of Ukraine. That is the message that for a week now all our Heads of State and Government have been sending to the highest levels in Moscow.

Simple solutions are available; the principles are well known. I even cited them here a week ago: the return of the Russian forces to their barracks, the deployment of international observers from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe to ensure the safety of the civilian population, the establishment of a Government of national unity in Kyiv, the swift holding of elections under international monitoring (see S/PV.7125). Let us negotiate the terms.

Time is running out. If the illegal referendum is held on Sunday, if Russia responds unfavourably, as it has announced it would, we will be forced to let Russia suffer all the political and economic consequences. I say "forced" because we do not want to follow a path leading backwards. I say "forced" because we will not have a choice in the face of such a major violation of international law on our continent.

Russia should resist the nationalist giddiness that has engulfed it and which is always ill advised. Russia should forget 1914 and understand that we are in 2014. It should return to the principles that it heralded for so long and that it tramples today. It should listen to what the entire international community is telling it. If it does, a solution is possible — a solution that respects the territorial integrity of Ukraine and its independence and ensures the rights of all communities of Ukraine. It should not lose the chess game for the sake of the limited and fleeting pleasure of taking a rook. That would not be a worthy display of the talent of Russian chess players, who are among the best in the world.

Mr. Gasana (Rwanda): It is increasingly alarming that the crisis and the turn of events in Ukraine poses a threat to the security of the entire region and continues to affect the daily lives of innocent people. While there are a number of diplomatic engagements under way in approaching the crisis, we believe it is important to take into account substantive issues that gave rise to the conflict in the first place thus addressing the grievances of all concerned parties.

We reiterate our support for the solidarity of all Ukrainian communities and maintain our call for an inclusive political Ukrainian-led dialogue that

recognizes the diversity of the Ukrainian people and emphasizes the protection of minorities and the Russian community. As the Security Council and the international community, we have a duty to find an end to the confrontation and allow the Ukrainian people to determine their own destiny and their own future in a genuine and impartial manner. We thank the United Nations leadership for its active role and steps taken thus far in an effort to de-escalate the situation as described to us by the Under-Secretary-General, Mr. Jeffrey Feltman, whom I wish to thank personally.

We remain concerned that intensified rhetoric on all fronts is undermining efforts to find common ground. We reiterate our call on all parties to exercise extreme restraint during this volatile time and to resolve the issue through existing bilateral and multilateral arguments. We the international community must uphold our commitment to the principles of peace and security and do our part to ensure that there is no further deterioration of the crisis, which includes a call for all parties involved to commit to finding a peaceful solution.

Rwanda stands for respect for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of States as stipulated in the Charter of the United Nations. In our view, it is time to focus our priority on achieving sustainable peace through genuine talks geared towards de-escalation of the situation and to encourage all concerned parties to deploy sustained efforts to defuse fear, hatred and other negative emotions that will worsen the situation.

Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Hussein (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to welcome the Prime Minister of Ukraine, Mr. Arseniy Yatsenyuk, and thank him for his clear briefing to the Security Council. The implications of the events in Ukraine, particularly in the region of Crimea, have reached a critical turning point, which requires concerted efforts to defuse the crisis, give precedence to the language of reason, and begin a direct dialogue between the parties concerned in order to end the crisis and prevent any further escalation. That will require urgent action on the part of the international community through the United Nations and other international organizations, and bilateral contacts aimed at creating an atmosphere conducive to enabling the parties to overcome the causes of the crisis and find a mechanism for the dialogue and negotiation necessary to achieve solutions that will preserve the interests of all parties concerned.

In this regard, Jordan welcomes the efforts of the Secretary General of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the proposals of its presidency, including on the establishment of an international contact mechanism to facilitate dialogue among the parties and the despach of a fact-finding mission to Ukraine to gather information and evaluate the security situation. We also support efforts to implement these proposals as soon as possible, given the current situation.

Jordan stresses the need to respect Ukraine's sovereignty, territorial integrity and political, and not to interference in its internal affairs. We also call for compliance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, and the settlement of disputes by peaceful means. Jordan stresses the territorial integrity of Ukraine, all regions of which, including Crimea, are subject to Ukrainian sovereignty, in accordance with the provisions of international law and the relevant international conventions, including the 1994 Budapest Memorandum and the 1997 Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation and Partnership between the Russian Federation and Ukraine.

We also affirm that the international community should help launch a political process in Ukraine that will include all parties and communities, including minorities, with a view to restoring peace, security and the rule of law in Ukraine. Such a political process must ensure the rights of all citizens of Ukraine and pave the way for presidential elections in May.

Diffusing the crisis in Ukraine — particularly the region of Crimea — and ensuring respect for its Constitution and territorial integrity will prevent a further escalation of the crisis and avert threats to international peace and security. Jordan calls on all the parties concerned to create an environment conducive to resolving the crisis, refrain from escalation, and keep all options open for solutions aimed at preserving the rights and interests of all and restoring peace and security in the region.

Mr. Oh Joon (Republic of Korea): We thank the Luxembourg presidency for holding today's public meeting on the crisis in Ukraine and appreciate your presence here, Mr. Minister. We are grateful for the participation of and statement by Prime Minister Yatsenyuk of Ukraine, and for the briefing by Under-Secretary-General Feltman. We express our firm support for the political process towards elections on 25 May, under the Government of Ukraine.

The Republic of Korea remains deeply concerned over the continuing escalation of tensions in Ukraine. We are particularly troubled by the decision of the Crimean Parliament to hold a referendum and its unilateral declaration of independence. Those actions will only further exacerbate the already tense situation. Without a doubt, it is vital that the unity, territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine be fully respected. Ukrainians should retain full power over their country's affairs, without intervention or influence by outside forces. In that vein, we urge the full observance of all relevant international and bilateral agreements, particularly the Charter of the United Nations and the 1994 Budapest Memorandum.

The unabated military activities in Crimea, which are violating the sovereignty of Ukraine, are also a source of grave concern. Any military presence or activity not authorized by the Ukrainian Government and in breach of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine must immediately cease. We welcome the ongoing diplomatic efforts of the international community to de-escalate the situation, in particular those of the Secretary-General and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). We also underscore the importance of bilateral dialogue between Ukraine and Russia.

The Republic of Korea believes that credible international monitoring mechanisms will have a notable calming effect on the ground. In that connection, it is worrying that the United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights and OSCE personnel have been denied access to the Crimean region. Unhindered access must be ensured for such missions. Any action threatening the safety and security of international personnel must be stopped.

The stability and prosperity of Ukraine are critical not only to peace in Europe, but also far beyond. We truly hope that Ukraine will emerge from the crisis as a strong, inclusive and prosperous democracy, led only by the will and aspirations of the Ukrainian people. It is the responsibility of the international community to assist the people of Ukraine in fulfilling that goal.

Mr. Liu Jieyi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Feltman for his briefing. China has been closely following developments in the situation on the ground in Ukraine, which remains highly complex and sensitive as we speak. The situation in Ukraine today is the result of a complex interlinkage among historic factors and circumstances on the ground.

China regrets the recent clashes that took place in the streets of Kyiv. China also condemns acts of extremism and violence. Efforts to address Ukrainian affairs should take the lawful rights and interests of all ethnic communities in Ukraine into consideration with a view to restoring the normal social order as soon as possible. On several public occasions, China has clearly stated its principled position on the question of Ukraine. It continues to address the issue objectively and impartially. It is China's long-standing position not to interfere in the internal affairs of other States and to respect their sovereignty and territorial integrity.

My country is of the view that all parties must now remain calm, exercise restraint, prevent a further escalation of the situation, and adhere to the approach of resolving the crisis through political and diplomatic channels. It is our hope that all parties concerned will promote communication and coordination, put the interests of all ethnic communities in Ukraine above everything else, keep their eyes on the big picture of maintaining regional peace and stability, and settling their differences by appropriate means.

China supports the constructive efforts and good offices of the international community in de-escalating the situation in Ukraine. We are open to all proposals and plans that would help to ease tensions in the country. We remain committed to playing a constructive role in achieving a political settlement of the question of Ukraine.

Mrs. Ogwu (Nigeria): I want to welcome Prime Minister Yatsenyuk and to thank him for his briefing. I also want to thank Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Jeffrey Feltman for providing an update on the situation in Ukraine.

In a world that is already deeply embroiled in turmoil in most regions, the current crisis in Ukraine is one crisis too many. The world can ill afford it. Nigeria remains unequivocal in highlighting the precarious and delicate nature of the situation in Ukraine. The imperative for a cautious approach by all parties to avoid exacerbation of the crisis could not be more urgent. That consideration is even more pertinent today as developments on the ground indicate that so little has changed since our last meeting in the Council on this issue (see S/PV.7131).

The fundamental principle at stake in the crisis is respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of a State Member of the United Nations. We want to remind all concerned to uphold the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, particularly as concerns the peaceful resolution of conflicts. In order to engender a peaceful settlement of the current impasse, there must be understanding. There must be mutual trust. There must be flexibility and a willingness between the parties to engage in constructive and peaceful dialogue. We want to urge the parties not to slam the door on dialogue, which represents a priceless opportunity for all issues to be discussed towards a peaceful and mutually acceptable resolution of the crisis.

The foundations for reconciliation are not far-fetched. We can find them in previous agreements. The Budapest Memorandum of 1994 and the Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation and Partnership, adopted in 1990 and renewed in 1997, are valued and credible instruments that provide a ready framework for resolving the crisis in Ukraine, and we call on all parties to abide by their commitments and obligations under those instruments. We also note that interlocutors have a vital role to play in ameliorating the situation.

While the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, Mr. Ivan Šimonović, is making progress in discussing human rights-related issues with stakeholders across Ukraine, we regret that he has had to cancel his visit to Crimea, which is at the core of the current crisis. We hope that he will be able to undertake that visit in the near future, because it is critical.

We would also like to see access granted to observers of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe in order to allow them to undertake an objective assessment of the situation on the ground. That, we believe, would foster a deeper understanding of the crisis. We want to reiterate our position that the referendum planned for Crimea contravenes the Constitution of Ukraine and is therefore illegitimate. For that reason, we call on the authorities of Crimea to postpone, and indeed cancel, the impending referendum. To go ahead with it would add insult to injury. Our ardent desire is to see a united, peaceful and democratic Ukraine where all citizens and communities can live side by side in peace, security and harmony.

Mr. Errázuriz (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): Chile expresses its profound concern about the very serious consequences of the announced referendum in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, the holding of which could lead to an escalation of the crisis in Ukraine. It is critical for the Council to contribute to ensuring the maximum stability and the moderation of the parties, and to use all appropriate means to find a peaceful solution to the crisis.

We thank you, Sir, for organizing this timely meeting, and the Prime Minister of Ukraine, Mr. Arseniy Yatsenyuk, for his participation in this meeting. We also thank Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. Jeffrey Feltman, for his briefing, and welcome the work of the Secretary-General and the mission of good offices in Ukraine of Deputy Secretary-General Eliasson, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General Robert Serry, and Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights Ivan Šimonović.

Chile reiterates the necessity to respect the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine. It is essential that all parties involved in the situation refrain from actions that are in breach of the Charter of the United Nations or international treaties and pacts to which Ukraine is a party. In that context, it is essential to respect the rule of law at both the international and national levels. At the national level, that must be reflected in full respect for the Ukrainian Constitution, which is particularly relevant and important today on the eve of the referendum to be convened by the Autonomous Republic of Crimea.

Chile appeals to the authorities of Ukraine to pursue their efforts to establish an inclusive national political process. At the international level, the parties must respect and adhere not only to the Charter of the United Nations, but also to the 1997 Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation and Partnership and the Budapest Memorandum. All the mechanisms provided for in those instruments should be used to find a peaceful solution to the dispute. We call for compliance with the Budapest Memorandum, which obliges the parties to respect the independence, sovereignty and current borders of Ukraine and to refrain from the threat or use of force to undermine the territorial integrity or political independence of the country. By the same token, we recall paragraph 6 of General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV), which states:

> "Any attempt aimed at the partial or total disruption of the national unity and the territorial integrity of a country is incompatible with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations."

We regret that Mr. Šimonović was not allowed to enter Crimea and that the observers of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) are still being prevented from doing so. It is essential for Mr. Šimonović and the observers to have secure access to Crimea. We urge that the efrforts of the United Nations and the OSCE to find a peaceful solution to the crisis not be hindered. Chile also reiterates its call on the Russian Federation and Ukraine to make use of existing mechanisms of dialogue to find that solution. We need to give time to diplomacy.

In conclusion, I reaffirm that it is for the people of Ukraine, in all its diversity and unity, to decide its own destiny in the framework of an inclusive process that guarantees the rule of law, human rights, fundamental freedoms and respect for the rights of minorities.

Mr. Quinlan (Australia): I thank you, Mr. President, for your presence in presiding over this open debate at such a critical time. I thank Under-Secretary-General Feltman for his briefing and welcome Prime Minister Yatsenyuk of Ukraine at this very difficult and decisive time for him and his country. It is important that the Council has heard directly from him today. We should commend him and the Ukrainian authorities for their restraint and courage in the face of continued provocation and for their efforts to design a new and inclusive future for Ukraine.

We welcome all international efforts to find solutions to the crisis. We commend the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) for their efforts. We support yesterday's statement by the Group of Seven, which spoke with one voice in urging Russia to join them and work together through diplomatic processes to resolve the crisis. We also commend the efforts of the United States to find a solution through engagement with both Russia and Ukraine. Russia must similarly show itself ready to engage seriously and constructively with the Ukrainian leaders to resolve the crisis.

In our numerous meetings over the past two weeks, the messages from Council members have been stark. Ukraine's territorial integrity must be respected. Russia must take immediate, deliberate and definitive steps to de-escalate the situation, including, critically, ordering Russian troops to return to their bases, and must allow independent monitors access to Crimea to verify the situation on the ground. Russia and Ukraine must engage with each other in direct dialogue at senior levels.

However, we have seen no sign of change in Russian actions. Instead, we have seen further Russian efforts to consolidate its control of Ukrainian territory in Crimea. It has extended its control of air, sea and land access to the peninsula. The closure of Crimea's airspace to non-Russian commercial air traffic has now further severed connections between Crimea and the rest of Ukraine. Russian forces have seized Ukrainian military and Government facilities and laid seige to others, including the naval headquarters. They have reportedly laid mines in a number of locations. Such actions cannot be justified by a perceived threat to Russian assets or nationals. OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities Ms. Thors found no evidence of violations or threats to the rights of Russian speakers in Crimea during her visit.

Media freedom has also been severely suppressed in a clear attempt to prevent coverage of what is occurring. Attacks on journalists have intensified. Despite the repeated calls for independent verification of the situation on the ground, unarmed OSCE monitors have also been denied access to Crimea three times now. United Nations representatives have been similarly unable to conduct visits. The Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Ukraine, Robert Serry, was threatened by armed men and Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights Šimonović has been denied entry to Crimea. Reports of intimidation of Crimean Tatars make it all the more crucial that human rights assessment missions proceed as planned.

The Crimean Parliament's announcement of a referendum, to be held on Sunday to decide whether Crimea should secede from Ukraine, was a dangerous further escalation of tensions and deeply destabilizing; so, too, were statements by Russian parliamentarians that Russia would formally accept the results of that referendum. Any such referendum would contravene article 73 of the Ukrainian Constitution, which provides that any alteration of the sovereign territorial boundaries of Ukraine can be decided only through an all-Ukraine national referendum. It would be inconsistent with chapter X of the Constitution, which sets out the constitutional role of Crimea within Ukraine. That has been underlined by both Ukraine's Acting President Turchynov and Prime Minister Yatsenyuk.

The Ukrainian Parliament also demanded on 11 March that the referendum be cancelled. The Crimean Parliament itself has no standing on that issue.

We also note that the referendum will be conducted at a time when Russian forces are in control of Crimea.

For all those reasons, the results of the proposed referendum will be inherently illegitimate and will not be accepted by the international community. We welcome the United States proposal that the Council adopt a draft resolution that would make this clear. We would support adopting such a draft resolution before the Sunday referendum.

However, it is not too late to resolve the crisis peacefully, but the window for that is rapidly closing. The international community has shown its willingness to support efforts to resolve the crisis, the continuation of which will not only have terrible consequences for the people of Ukraine but will also reverberate far beyond that. The Ukrainian Parliament has asked the United Nations for its support and we should remain ready to assist. International principles that are at the core of international relations not only in Europe but globally, and that matter fundamentally to each and every sovereign State, are at stake.

For diplomacy to have a chance, Russia needs to actively de-escalate the situation. It must pull back its forces to their bases and decrease their numbers to agreed levels. It must allow international observers access to Crimea to verify the situation on the ground and accept the proposed OSCE monitoring mission. It must also demonstrate its respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, including by desisting from any support for the referendum proposed this Sunday. And it must engage in direct dialogue with Ukraine, as Ukraine has repeatedly requested, either bilaterally or through diplomatic mechanisms, such as the contact group that has been proposed. The international community has offered its assistance and dialogue. It is now imperative that Russia work with international partners to ensure that the crisis is resolved peacefully.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I shall respond directly to the direct question put to me by Mr. Yatsenyuk. The Russians do not want war, and I am sure that the Ukrainians do not want it either. Furthermore — and this is something that I want to underscore in particular — we see no grounds for viewing the situation in such terms. We do not want any further exacerbation of the situation.

Russia did not provoke the spiral of destabilizing violence that has determined developments in Ukraine in recebt months. Some colleagues who spoke here before me today painted an almost idyllic picture of the situation in Ukraine. They claimed that if it had not been for Russia, everyone in Ukraine would live long and happy lives. Some others simply tried to claim a role in the crisis. For them, it seems to be a game; for us, it is an issue of lives and the fundamental norms of international law. If we are to understand how to normalize the situation, we need to objectively analyse the root causes of the current crisis.

We have already said in this Chamber that there were no objective grounds for Ukraine's deteriorating situation over the past few months. All that was at stake was the need for President Yanukovych and his Government to adopt a decision on whether it was beneficial to Ukraine to sign the association agreement with the European Union that was proposed by Brussels. The reaction to Kyiv's decision to refrain from that for now while still maintaining a so-called European future outlook was totally unfounded. The escalation was provoked both by forces in Ukraine and by Western sympathizers with that country.

Having refused to engage in trilateral negotiations on the economic problems of Ukraine, under the European Union-Ukraine-Russia format, Brussels and, for some reason, Washington, D.C., started to demand, almost in the form of an ultimatum, that Kyiv sign the association agreement, which had significant economic consequences for Ukraine. They appealed not only to the Government but also to the street.

Of course, the people of Ukraine have the right to peaceful political protests, but why turn the Maidan into a militarized camp? Why send columns of militants, well-trained and well-equipped by someone, into the centre of Kyiv? Why provoke the representatives of law-enforcement agencies by pelting them with paving stones and Molotov cocktails, using bulldozers as weapons of street terror? Are the seizure of administrative buildings and political party headquarters, and the killing and torturing of those arrested there — for example, in the torture chambers set up in the trade unions building — consistent with democracy? The acts of violence that took place in Kyiv clearly require careful international investigation.

The picture painted by Kyiv and Western propaganda completely contradicts those reports, which show that the same people fired on positions held by the law-enforcement agencies and by the demonstrators. There were also recent reports that they also fired on

the headquarters of the so-called Commandant of the Maidan who now leads Ukraine's National Security Council.

Why have the representatives of Western countries fuelled the enmity and unrest? Why did the Speaker of the Parliament of Lithuania, in a speech to the Maidan, call for continued anti-governmental actions? Why were there Ministers for Foreign Affairs and other high-level civil servants and representatives of some Western States among the demonstrators? Why was there such blatant interference in the domestic affairs of a State, in blatant disregard for its sovereignty?

However the activities of Victor Yanukovych during that period may be judged, no one in this Chamber can claim that he did not seek a possible compromise with the opposition. The post of Prime Minister was offered to Mr. Yatsenyuk. Why did he not seize that opportunity to prevent the country from falling into economic disaster? Why not seize not only the opportunity provided by offers from the European Union and the United States, but also by readiness of the Russian Federation to help with credits and lower fuel prices to begin to stabilize the economic situation?

Finally, why not seize the opportunity of the agreement of 21 February to end the stand-off, re-establish the normal political process, and cement the economic and political integrity of the country? Could it be that the forces seeking power and authority were not interested in democracy, but in a dictatorship, when they threatened all those who differed with them, including members of the Rada? As a result, the legitimate legal President was overthrown and forced to leave Kyiv under the threat of physical violence.

Those present in this Chamber know full well that the violent overthrow of an authority is illegal. Such actions have been repeatedly condemned, including in documents adopted by the Security Council. Instead of the Government of national unity provided for pursuant to the agreement of 21 February, a Government of the victors was established in Kyiv, as acknowledged by Mr. Yatsenyuk. A number of key positions, including that of Minister of Defence, went to representatives of the radical nationalist Freedom Party. In the resolution adopted in December 2012, the European Parliament characterized the views of that party as anti-Russian, anti-Semitic, xenophobic, and counter to the fundamental values of the European Union. It called on all pro-democracy parties in the Rada not to form coalitions with that party. Where are those European values now? Are the new authorities in Ukraine sticking to them?

The real bulwark of those new forces is an even more radical organization, the so-called Right Sector, whose leader has made his presidential ambitions clear. The radicals have not laid down their weapons, as required by the agreement of 21 February. Moreover, they are restocking their arsenals with weapons seized from military depots. The new authorities have done nothing to organize a national dialogue to promote genuine constitutional reform, as stipulated in the agreement of 21 February.

They have done their best, however, to antagonize the eastern and south-eastern regions of Ukraine. First of all, they got rid of a law on languages that afforded official status to the Russian language, and then they eliminated the Russian-language versions of Government websites. Instead of engaging in dialogue, Kyiv sends its political commissars to the eastern region. Those who dissent are arrested, as happened with a popular governor of the Donetsk region who stated that he intended to participate in the presidential elections, and with former Governor Dobkin of the Kharkiv oblast. The fract is, the Kyiv authorities themselves are splitting their country in two.

A great deal has been said in the Council today, often with considerable passion, with regard to the situation in Crimea and the decision of the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic to hold a referendum on to decide on annexation by Russia or on broader autonomous status within Ukraine. Some dispute the legitimacy of such a referendum. However, what is unacceptable is the manipulation of individual principles and norms of international law, arbitrarily wresting them from the general context not only of international law itself, but in particular of concrete political situations and historical specificities.

In each particular case, one must seek the right balance between the principles of territorial integrity and the right to self-determination. It is clear that the achievement of the right to self-determination in the form of separation from an existing State is an extraordinary measure. However, in the case of Crimea, it obviously arose as a result of the legal vacuum created by the violent coup against the legitimate Government carried out by nationalist radicals in Kyiv, as well as by their direct threats to impose their order throughout the territory of Ukraine.

A number of countries that have spoken out against the expression of the popular will of the Crimean people rushed to recognize the independence of Kosovo, which was declared without a referendum by a simple decision of Parliament, despite the protests of Belgrade and the fact that the declaration of independence took place against the backdrop of an illegal military operation by NATO countries in a situation in which the majority of the Serbian population was forced to leave the province. I shall not even speaking about resolution 1244 (1999), which retains all its validity in establishing an international protectorate over Kosovo.

It is well known that the concept of a referendum is not new. Referendums have been or will be held in Puerto Rico, Gibraltar, the Falkland Islands, Catalonia and Scotland. The legal and historical contexts, as well as the results of all those votes, are all quite different, but the fact remains that the inhabitants of those territories were or will be given the opportunity to express their free will. Why should the people of Crimea be an exception?

There are other interesting precedents. The Comoros declared their independence from France in 1975 and were accepted as a State Member of the United Nations consisting of four islands. However, in February 1976 France organized for the residents of one of those islands — Mayotte island — a referendum to determine whether they wanted to remain part of France or to be part of the new State of the Comoros. By a small majority, they voted against independence from France. The Head of State of the Comoros tried to keep that from happening. In February 1976, he requested that an emergency meeting of the Security Council be convened (see S/PV.1888). France's actions were characterized as naked aggression and an encroachment on the national unity of the Comorian State. He noted that under French law in force before the independence of the Comoros islands, the island of Mayotte was an inalienable part of Comorian territory. He also underscored the fact that the Comoros was accepted as a State Member at the United Nations as a State composed of four islands. It was all to no avail. Draft resolution S/11967 in support of the Comorian position was vetoed by France.

The Declaration of Independence of the United States refers to a situation in which it had become necessary for a people to dissolve the political ties connecting it to another people. Let us see how the people of Crimea view that position during the upcoming referendum.

Finally, some who have spoken in the Council referred to the actions of the Russian Black Sea Fleet in Crimea. We consider those references to be incorrect. The Russian Black Sea Fleet is in no way interfering in the situation leading up to the referendum, which has been proclaimed and organized by the Crimeans themselves.

Ms. Murmokaitė (Lithuania): As Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Feltman noted in his statement, this is the sixth time since 1 March that we have met to address the crisis caused by Russian aggression against Ukraine. In the meantime, the Heads of State of the European Union have condemned the unprovoked violation of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity by the Russian Federation, and called on the later to immediately withdraw its armed forces to their areas of permanent stationing. That call was reinforced by a similar statement issued by the leaders of the Group of Seven and the Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe) to stress the illegality of the referendum in Crimea and call on all actors to refrain from supporting unconstitutional activities.

As a leader and a patriot, ex-President Yanukovych should have put Ukraine first and done everything within his power to normalize the situation. He should have led the implementation of the oft-cited 21 February agreement, which he signed very unwillingly and which Russia refused to co-sign, as eloquently pointed out by the French Ambassador. Instead, Yanukovych abandoned his country and fled, exposing it to partition and annexation. Under those circumstances, the Ukrainian Rada, whose legitimacy have never and cannot be challenged, appointed a new Prime Minister in accordance with the Ukrainian Constitution and by the overwhelming majority of votes, enabling the formation of a unity Government that is fully representative of the ethnic and geographical diversity of the Ukrainian population, as was also pointed out by our colleague from the United States.

We commend the incredible restraint and moral fortitude of the Ukrainian Government, its people and its military in the face of the continuous escalation of provocations and a massive propaganda onslaught. It speaks volumes on the Prime Minister's readiness and commitment to pursuing the peaceful resolution of the current crisis.

Never has a referendum been set up so hurriedly, and even that very short time frame was cut still shorter in a clear violation of Ukraine's Constitution and also the constitution of Crimea, which unambiguously states that Crimea shall be an integral part of Ukraine. The original inhabitants of Ukraine, Crimean Tatars, have spoken loudly against the referendum and Crimea's secession and have reaffirmed their desire to see their homeland as part of Ukraine. But their voices will not count, nor will the voices of many other ethnic groups inhabiting Crimea, including Ukrainians themselves, because the referendum is specifically designed to endorse secession. There is simply no other option but to say yes to partition.

Notably, in the meantime, Russia is fast-tracking legislation that will facilitate the annexation of Crimea — or any piece of any other country, for that matter. One can only imagine the shudders that is sending across the entire region, whose memories of the recent Soviet occupation and invasions are still very much alive.

As a signatory of the 1991 Almaty Declaration, the 1994 Budapest Memorandum, the 1997 Agreement between Russia and Ukraine on the Status of Conditions of the Presence of the Russian Black Sea Fleet on the Territory of Ukraine and the 1997 Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation and Partnership between Ukraine and the Russian Federation, the Russian Federation has repeatedly recognized Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty. Furthermore, as a signatory of the Budapest Memorandum, it has undertaken the obligation to protect and guarantee Ukraine's sovereignty, inviolability and territorial integrity, in exchange — as has been pointed out — for Ukraine's relinquishing its nuclear-weapons arsenal.

The blatant breach of bilateral obligations and international law by Russia is undermining the very foundation of international law as well as regional and international peace and security. We strongly call on all States to make it clear that they will not recognize the referendum and its outcome.

Nothing that has been said, including by the Russian Ambassador — nothing on Earth — warrants or justifies Russia's actions and those of the pro-Russian forces in Crimea. Whatever concerns — legitimate concerns — may be raised about the conditions of ethno-linguistic minorities, they could have and still can be readily addressed through existing regional and international instruments. The Council of Europe has plenty of mechanisms to that effect and is ready to engage; so do the OSCE and the United Nations. Let those organizations do their job, just as they have done with success on multiple other occasions, especially since Ukraine has repeatedly invited monitors and representatives of those organizations and declared its openness to be visited, assessed, inspected and monitored. Ukraine has nothing to hide.

But its opponents do. Why else would certain forces try to do everything in their power to isolate Crimea before the illegal referendum? The pro-Russian forces propped up by the ever-growing Russian military presence on the peninsula have repeatedly denied access to OSCE teams, to Assistant Secretary-General Šimonović and the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Robert Serry, who was harassed and denied entry twice. Crimean Ukrainians are attacked and accused of being occupiers in their own country, taunted en masse as fascists and Nazis, simply for no other reason but being Ukrainian.

Crimean airspace is closed to flights, except those from and to Moscow. Waterways are blocked, electricity and supplies to Ukrainian forces cut. Ships are sunk at water entries to the peninsula, trenches dug and, as reported by the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, landmines are being laid. Land access is monitored by so-called unidentified Russian-speaking men who are armed to the teeth. Crimea's information space has also been blocked. All Ukrainian information channels and the local Tatar network have been clamped down and replaced by Russian channels transmitting continuous anti-Ukrainian propaganda. Journalists have been threatened, assaulted and kidnapped.

It is in that context of Crimea's isolation, gunpoint tactics by pro-Russian forces and extreme levels of anti-Ukrainian hysteria that the illegal referendum is to take place this coming weekend, paving the way to Crimea's annexation by Russia. The crisis is deeply troubling. Besides violating the underlying principles of international law and of a country's sovereignty and territorial integrity, it also has a highly explosive human dimension. The anti-Ukrainian propaganda and a barrage of lies risk unleashing the most dangerous demons of hatred, with potentially devastating consequences for the region and international security as a whole.

We call on the Russian Federation to stop the warmongering and its dangerous propaganda campaign

aimed at its neighbours, and to use whatever little time remains for open dialogue and the participation of international mediation. While it is still possible, we appeal to the Russian Federation to withdraw its troops to their regular locations, accept the primacy of international law and reaffirm its respect for the Charter of the United Nations, engage in direct dialogue with Kyiv without any further delay, revert to existing mechanisms of crisis resolution, and accept the initiatives of the United Nations, the OSCE, the Council of Europe and whatever other initiatives there are that are aimed at preventing further escalation and launching international monitoring mechanisms.

The solution to the crisis in Ukraine can be based only on the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of the country, as well as on strict adherence to international law and international standards of behaviour. If this chance is missed, the consequences for the international order are difficult to assess, and the full responsibility for them will be Russia's to bear. The window of opportunity, as our British colleague has referred to it, is still open. It is up to Russia to keep it open, or to shut it in the face of the international community.

Mr. Mangaral (Chad) (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Feltman for his briefing. I welcome the transition Prime Minister of Ukraine, Mr. Yatsenyuk, and thank him for the information he has provided.

Chad notes with great concern the continuing escalation of the crisis in Ukraine, despite the repeated calls of the international community, in particular the Security Council, for calm and restraint. We think that it is still possible to take the path of national reconciliation and preservation of the unity of Ukraine through an inclusive process of dialogue between the different components and respecting diversity.

Chad also calls for the respect for territorial integrity, the non-use of force and the peaceful settlement of disputes in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations. The parties must take the necessary steps to create a climate of dialogue with a view to achieving genuine national reconciliation and respecting human rights, more specifically, the rights of minorities. Chad supports international mediation for a peaceful outcome of the crisis and welcomes the efforts deployed by the Secretary-General towards that end.

Mrs. Perceval (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to express the appreciation of my delegation for the commitment with which Luxembourg has served in its presidency of the Security Council, as can be seen in the fact that you, Mr. President, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, are presiding over today's meeting. We thank Under-Secretary-General Jeffrey Feltman for his briefing and for his call. We value the good offices that the Secretary-General is employing. We acknowledge the various actors that are collaborating to reach a diplomatic solution of this crisis. We welcome the Prime Minister of Ukraine for his participation in today's meeting.

Argentina has been following with concern the situation in Ukraine, particularly since we received the note from the Permanent Representative of that country on 28 February (S/2014/136). The Council and the international community have given the issue intense attention as the situation has become increasingly complex.

The delegation of Argentina reiterates once again that it is essential that we stick to the principles that we undertook to uphold when we became Members of the United Nations. In particular, we must recall our commitment not to intervene in matters within the domestic jurisdiction of States. In light of that, we understand that the action of any State or international organization must preserve due respect for Ukraine's conduct of its internal affairs.

As a Member of the Organization, Argentina considers it essential to highlight the primary duty to respect the territorial integrity and political independence of all States. My country has sustained that principle throughout its history, even prior to the very existence of the United Nations, and will continue to do so unwaveringly.

We have followed with concern the evolution of Ukraine's domestic situation and listened attentively to the statements by the various authorities of that country before this Council. We are concerned about past and present violence and the possibility that it may worsen. We regret that, despite repeated appeals to all parties and key stakeholders to refrain from any action that could contribute to inflammatory rhetoric and to aggravating the situation, particularly unilateral acts on the ground, it has still not been possible to take substantive steps to establish constructive dialogue and good faith with the aim of resolving the current crisis.

It is essential that the international community and the actors in Ukraine themselves facilitate democratic

dialogue and contribute to finding peaceful solutions to the current situation. In that regard, the Argentine delegation wishes to emphatically appeal to all Ukrainian parties to refrain from taking positions and decisions that could make the situation worse or establish faits accomplis that hinder dialogue and the search for the necessary compromises that will make a comprehensive solution possible.

We hope that the internal evolution in Ukraine can take democratic paths, as that is the only way to be inclusive. At the same time, we consider it essential to observe strict respect for human rights and humanitarian law. Our own national experience in that regard teaches us that for any community, such commitment is essential to ensuring a future of peace and development with social inclusion and the full operation of democratic institutions. We hope that throughout the process due respect will be maintained for all minorities, whether ethnic, linguistic, cultural or religious.

International efforts have been directed towards finding solutions through diplomatic channels. They have crystalized in high-level meetings in Paris and Rome, as well as in various proposals to deploy mediation or observation missions. While those initiatives have not been fruitful, diplomatic efforts for a rapprochement must be redoubled to alleviate tensions on the ground and, at the same time, open space for dialogue to resolve the crisis. The way out of the current crisis is political and must be peaceful and concerted.

The international community must actively contribute through mechanisms that the Ukrainians consider necessary or appropriate to achieve internal peace in the country. It is our hope that the competent regional organizations can constructively contribute in that regard. It is incumbent on all of us to refrain from exacerbating internal dissent and to strictly adhere to the principle of non-interference by military, economic or political means in the internal affairs of sovereign States.

As for the Security Council, we understand that our primary responsibility is to continue making concrete proposals that will contribute to a resolution of the crisis and to appropriate follow-up of the situation with a view to preserving international peace and security, and, where appropriate, to adopt the appropriate measures. Argentina's commitment to those goals can be depended on.

The President (*spoke in French*): Prime Minister Yatsenyuk has requested the floor to make a further statement. I give him the floor.

Mr. Yatsenyuk (Ukraine): Mr. President, let me thank you and the Council members for your unconditional support of the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of my country. This is really great, and I will deliver the message to the people of Ukraine that all, except one, supported the independence and territorial integrity of my country. We still believe that we can find a peaceful solution. My Government is committed to executing all international obligations. We adhere to all bilateral and multilateral treaties that Ukraine has signed and ratified.

Crimea was, is and will be an integral part of Ukraine. We will never recognize any kind of makeshift, artificial and falsified so-called referendum. We are ready to hold a nationwide dialogue in order to increase the powers of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea in the Ukrainian Parliament through constitutional means and tools. We will protect and defend every minority in my country. We stick to the principle of the Ukrainian Constitution that says that, except for the Ukrainian language, the only other language indicated in article 10 of the Ukrainian Constitution is the Russian one. We will protect every religion of every one who is a Ukrainian citizen. And we want to be very clear in stating that this Government is ready for an open dialogue.

We extended our hand to Russia, but in return we got the barrel of a gun. But we still believe that Russia is ready to negotiate and to tackle this dramatic conflict — not only in our bilateral relations, but in the whole of Europe — by peaceful means. What we are asking for is the truth. History will judge us. We have a chance to make history. We will do whatever we can in order to preserve peace and stability and in order to save my country.

The President (*spoke in French*): There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 5 p.m.